The Soviet-Palestinian Lie

by John Richardson

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Translations of this item:

- French
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- "[T]he Islamic world was a waiting petri dish in which we could nurture a virulent strain of America-hatred, grown from the bacterium of Marxist-Leninist thought. Islamic anti-Semitism ran deep... We had only to keep repeating our themes -- that the United States and Israel were 'fascist, imperial-Zionist countries' bankrolled by rich Jews." — Yuri Andropov, former KGB chairman.

- As early as 1965, the USSR had formally proposed in the UN a resolution that would condemn Zionism as colonialism and racism. Although the Soviets did not succeed in their first attempt, the UN turned out to be an overwhelmingly grateful recipient of Soviet bigotry and propaganda; in November 1975, Resolution 3379 condemning Zionism as "a form of racism and racial discrimination" was finally passed.

The recent discovery that Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority (PA), was a KGB spy in Damascus in 1983, was discarded by many in the mainstream media as a "historical curiosity" -- except that the news inconveniently came out at the time that President Vladimir Putin was trying to organize new talks between Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Predictably, the Palestinian Authority immediately dismissed the news. Fatah official Nabil Shaath denied that Abbas was ever a KGB operative, and called the claim a "smear campaign."

The discovery, far from being a "historical curiosity," is an aspect of one of many pieces in the puzzle of the origins of 20th and 21st century Islamic terrorism. Those origins are almost always obfuscated and obscured in ill-concealed attempts at presenting a particular narrative about the causes of contemporary terrorism, while decrying all and any evidence to the contrary as "conspiracy theories."

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There is nothing conspiratorial about the latest revelation. It comes from a document in the Mitrokhin archives at the Churchill Archives Center at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. Vasily Mitrokhin was a former senior officer of the Soviet Foreign Intelligence service, who was later demoted to KGB archivist. At immense risk to his own life, he spent 12 years diligently copying secret KGB files that would not otherwise have become available to the public (the KGB foreign intelligence archives remain sealed from the public, despite the demise of the Soviet Union). When Mitrokhin defected from the Russia in 1992, he brought the copied files with him to the UK. The declassified parts of the Mitrokhin archives were brought to the public eye in the writings of Cambridge professor Christopher Andrew, who co-wrote *The Mitrokhin Archive* (published in two volumes) together with the Soviet defector. Mitrokhin's archives led, among other things, to the discovery of many KGB spies in the West and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the history of the full extent of the KGB's influence and disinformation operations is not nearly as well-known as it should be, considering the immense influence that the KGB wielded on international affairs. The KGB conducted hostile operations against NATO as a whole, against democratic dissent within the Soviet bloc, and set in motion subversive events in Latin America and the Middle East, which resonate to this day.

The KGB, furthermore, was an extremely active player in the creation of so-called liberation movements in Latin America and in the Middle East, movements that went on to engage in lethal terrorism -- as documented in, among other places, *The Mitrokhin Archive*, as well as in the books and writings of Ion Mihai Pacepa, the highest-ranking Communist official to defect from the former Soviet bloc.

Pacepa was deputy chief of the Romanian foreign intelligence service and a personal advisor to Romanian Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu before he defected to the United States in 1978. Pacepa worked with the CIA to bring down communism for more than 10 years; the agency described his cooperation as "an important and unique contribution to the United States."

In a 2004 interview, FrontPage Magazine, Pacepa said:

> The PLO was dreamt up by the KGB, which had a penchant for "liberation" organizations. There was the National Liberation Army of Bolivia, created by the KGB in 1964 with help from Ernesto "Che" Guevara ... the KGB also created the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which carried out numerous bombing attacks... In 1964 the first PLO Council, consisting of 422 Palestinian representatives handpicked by the KGB, approved the Palestinian National Charter -- a document that had been drafted in Moscow. The Palestinian National Covenant and the Palestinian Constitution were also born in Moscow, with the help of Ahmed Shuqairy, a KGB influence agent who became the first PLO chairman...

In the *Wall Street Journal*, Pacepa explained how the KGB built up Arafat -- or in current parlance, how they constructed a narrative for him:

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> He was an Egyptian bourgeois turned into a devoted Marxist by KGB foreign intelligence. The KGB had trained him at its Balashikha special-operations school east of Moscow and in the mid-1960s decided to groom him as the future PLO leader. First, the KGB destroyed the official records of Arafat's birth in Cairo, and replaced them with fictitious documents saying that he had been born in Jerusalem and was therefore a Palestinian by birth.

As the late historian Robert S. Wistrich wrote in *A Lethal Obsession*, the Six-Day War unleashed a protracted, intensive campaign on the part of the Soviet Union to delegitimize Israel and the movement for Jewish self-determination, known as Zionism. This was done in order to rectify the damage to the Soviet Union's prestige after Israel defeated its Arab allies:

> After 1967, the USSR began to flood the world with a constant flow of anti-Zionist propaganda... Only the Nazis in their twelve years of power had ever succeeded in producing such a sustained flow of fabricated libels as an instrument of their domestic and foreign policy[1].

For this the USSR employed a host of Nazi trigger words to describe the Israeli defeat of the Arab 1967 aggression, several of which are still employed on the Western left today when it comes to Israel, such as "practitioners of genocide", "racists", "concentration camps", and "Herrenvolk."

Furthermore, the USSR engaged in an international smearing campaign in the Arab world. In 1972, the Soviet Union, launched operation "SIG" (*Sionistskiye Gosudarstva*, or "Zionist Governments"), with the purpose of portraying the United States as an "arrogant and haughty Jewish fiefdom financed by Jewish money and run by Jewish politicians, whose aim was to subordinate the entire Islamic world". Some 4,000 agents were sent from the Soviet Bloc into the Islamic world, armed with thousands of copies of the old czarist Russian forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. According to KGB chairman Yuri Andropov:

> the Islamic world was a waiting petri dish in which we could nurture a virulent strain of America-hatred, grown from the bacterium of Marxist-Leninist thought. Islamic anti-Semitism ran deep... We had only to keep repeating our themes — that the United States and Israel were "fascist, imperial-Zionist countries" bankrolled by rich Jews. Islam was obsessed with preventing the infidels' occupation of its territory, and it would be highly receptive to our characterization of the U.S. Congress as a rapacious Zionist body aiming to turn the world into a Jewish fiefdom.

As early as 1965, the USSR had formally proposed in the UN a resolution that would condemn Zionism as colonialism and racism. Although the Soviets did not succeed in their first attempt, the UN turned out to be an overwhelmingly grateful recipient of Soviet bigotry and propaganda; in November 1975, Resolution 3379 condemning Zionism as "a form of racism and racial discrimination' was finally passed. This followed nearly a decade of diligent Soviet propaganda directed at the Third World, depicting Israel as a Trojan Horse for Western imperialism and racism. This campaign was designed to build support for Soviet foreign policy in Africa and the Middle East.

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[2] Another tactic was constantly to draw visual and verbal comparisons in the Soviet media between Israel and South Africa (this is the origin of the canard of "Israeli apartheid").

Not only the Third World, but also the Western Left ate all this Soviet propaganda raw. The latter continues to disseminate large parts of it to this day. In fact, slandering someone, whoever they are, as racist, became one of the Left's primary weapons against those with whom it disagrees.

Part of the Soviet tactics in isolating Israel was making the PLO look "respectable." According to Pacepa, this task was left to Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu, who had achieved the unlikely propaganda feat of portraying the ruthless Romanian police state to the West as a "moderate" Communist country. Nothing could have been farther from the truth, as was ultimately revealed in the 1989 trial against Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife Elena, which ended with their executions.

Yasser Arafat (left) with Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu during a visit in Bucharest in 1974. (Image source: Romanian National History Museum)

Pacepa wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*:

> In March 1978, I secretly brought Arafat to Bucharest for final instructions on how to behave in Washington. "You simply have to keep on pretending that you'll break with terrorism and that you'll recognize Israel -- over, and over, and over," Ceausescu told him [Arafat]... Ceausescu was euphoric over the prospect that both Arafat and he might be able to snag a Nobel Peace Prize with their fake displays of the olive branch.

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> ... Ceausescu failed to get his Nobel Peace Prize. But in 1994 Arafat got his -- all because he continued to play the role we had given him to perfection. He had transformed his terrorist PLO into a government-in-exile (the Palestinian Authority), always pretending to call a halt to Palestinian terrorism while letting it continue unabated. Two years after signing the Oslo Accords, the number of Israelis killed by Palestinian terrorists had risen by 73%.

In his book, *Red Horizons*, Pacepa related what Arafat said at a meeting he had with him at PLO headquarters in Beirut around the time that Ceausescu was trying to make the PLO "respectable":

> I am a revolutionary. I have dedicated my whole life to the Palestinian cause and the destruction of Israel. I will not change or compromise. I will not agree with anything that recognizes Israel as a state. Never... But I am always willing to make the West think that I want what Brother Ceausescu wants me to do.[3]

The propaganda neatly paved the way for terrorism, Pacepa explained in *National Review*.

> General Aleksandr Sakharovsky, who created Communist Romania's intelligence structure and then rose to head up all of Soviet Russia's foreign intelligence, often lectured me: "In today's world, when nuclear arms have made military force obsolete, terrorism should become our main weapon."

The Soviet general was not joking. In 1969 alone, there were 82 hijackings of planes worldwide. According to Pacepa, most of those hijackings were committed by the PLO or affiliated groups, all supported by the KGB. In 1971, when Pacepa visited Sakharovsky at his Lubyanka (KGB headquarters) office, the general boasted: "Airplane hijacking is my own invention". Al Qaeda used airplane hijackings on September 11, when they used planes to blow up buildings.

So where does Mahmoud Abbas fit into all this? In 1982, Mahmoud Abbas studied in Moscow at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. (In 1983 he went on to become a KGB spy). There he wrote his thesis, published in Arabic as *The Other Side: The Secret Relations between Nazism and the Leadership of the Zionist Movement.* In it, he denied the existence of gas chambers in the concentration camps, and questioned the number of Holocaust victims by calling the six million Jews who had been killed "a fantastic lie," while simultaneously blaming the Holocaust on the Jews themselves. His thesis supervisor was Yevgeny Primakov, who later went on to become foreign minister of Russia. Even after he had finished his thesis, Abbas maintained close ties with the Soviet leadership, the military and members of security services. In January 1989, he was appointed co-chairman of the Palestinian-Soviet (and then Russian-Palestinian) Working Committee on the Middle East.

When the current leader of the Palestinian Arabs used to be an acolyte of the KGB -- whose machinations have claimed the lives of thousands of people in the Middle East alone -- this cannot be discarded as a "historical curiosity," even if contemporary opinion-makers would prefer to ignore it by viewing it as such.

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Although Pacepa and Mitrokhin sounded their warnings many years ago, few people bothered to listen to them. They should.

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[1] Robert S. Wistrich, 'A Lethal Obsession' (2010) p 139.

[2] Robert S. Wistrich, 'A Lethal Obsession' (2010), p 148.

[3] Ion Mihai Pacepa, 'Red Horizons' (1990) p 92-93.

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